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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of non-reading materials (such as video and audiotapes) for obtaining information has lead to dependent students who cannot discover information on their own. The danger of such a condition is the gradual shrinking of collective knowledge from generation to generation. Only through the skilled use of reading-based study can knowledge be expanded beyond mediocrity. (Author)

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Essay on Reading-Based Study Skills

By Al Tucker

Reading-based study relies upon students' reading abilities to locate, retain, recall, and recite the information gained through print. Non-reading study relies upon other media for acquiring information, such as computers, audio recordings, television, video tapes, dramatic presentations, lectures, memorizing systems, and verbal repetition.

The differences between reading-based study and non-reading-based study are the media: the former requires the ability to read, while the latter does not. Non-reading study is useful for helping students learn essential knowledge, and certainly should not be neglected, but neither should the reading-based study be neglected.

The use of non-reading media for learning increased during the 1970s and 80s as access to non-reading media increased (Gaddy, 1986, Page 340). Students found that they could make passing grades, score well on "exit" exams, and even talk with a high degree of intelligence, <u>all without having to open a book</u>. The non-reading methods for learning are quite adequate for meeting the minimum demands of schools. The ability to pass tests and talk intelligently without the ability to read is possible, but once outside of the school environment, the lack of reading-based study ability is glaringly noticed by employers and customers (Stedman and Kaestle, 1987, Page 42).

Perhaps the teaching profession has done too good of a job. Teachers have become so efficient in teaching, that the students

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know they can learn all they need to learn, in order to pass the tests, simply by listening to the teacher, watching video presentations, participating in cute fun-filled exercises, and responding to "user friendly" computer software, all without the pain of having to locate, retain, recall, or recite from printed sources (Simons, 1989, Page 419).

Students have learned from experience that if the teacher does not mention it in class, it will not be on the test. They, unfortunately, feel they have to learn only that which is taught, not realizing that in the real world, there is no excuse for ignorance. If a student learns only what he is taught, he will not learn very much, for there is not time enough in a school day to teach everything students should know.

Parents and students have long criticized teachers for including material on exams that were not specifically taught. This criticism is without merit, for if students cannot synthesize pieces of information taught to them in class into heretofore unexplored information, then their personal study of the subject must have been superficial and cosmetic.

Even the best teachers cannot teach everything students should know. The development of skills in the use of knowledge is entirely up to the students. Even if the teacher is armed with a long list of specific behavioral objectives, the students still have to do the learning. All educated persons are <u>self</u>-educated, even students who had great teachers.

Students who learn only what they are taught are limited to the knowledge possessed by prior generations. If students learn

only what they are taught, then each succeeding generation will know less than the prior generations. Teachers cannot possibly teach all knowledge to a student in twelve years of schooling. Furthermore, it is mathematically impossible to teach in twelve years what a person needs to know for the next sixty to seventy years. Somewhere along the line, students must accept the responsibility for their own education, and determine to go beyond the comparatively narrow demands of exams and state-mandated "essential elements" (Angeletti, 1991, Page 288).

The only way students can escape the limitation of mediocre learning is to depend more on learning through reading-based study. Reading is the only media that is in the complete control of the student. Non-reading media are under the control of the persons producing and presenting the information. Of the various media used for conveying information, only the freedom of the press and the freedom of speech are protected by the United States Constitution. There are limits on the freedom of radio programming, video content, and sound recordings. Myriad laws govern what, how, when, where, and even why teachers can teach, but there is no law governing what, when, how, where and why students can learn on their own, especially through reading.

The best and most efficient media for learning is the printed page. Although a teacher, for instance, is not allowed to teach the Bible in the classroom, there is no law against the student reading the Bible. Although teachers may be hesitant to discuss certain topics, students are not forbidden to read about them.

Dependence on non-reading media for learning will eventually

drain education of its substance, and the nation will lose what took centuries to accumulate. Reading-based studying is the avenue by which young people exceed present and past levels of knowledge and understanding.

The test of a truly great teacher is not that students know as much as the teacher knows, but that the students know more than what the teacher knows. When students exceed the knowledge and wisdom of the teacher, the teacher can be commended for a job well done, for it means the students were taught how to study on their own.

When students are taught how to study using their reading ability, the frontiers of knowledge will be challenged. But when they are limited to the non-reading media for learning, they learn, at best, only what has already been learned, and new knowledge is rarely discovered, examined, analyzed, and synthesized with knowledge from prior generations and for the future.

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Abstract

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The proliferation of non-reading materials, such as video and audio tapes, for obtaining information has led to dependent students who cannot discover information on their own. The danger of such a condition is the gradual shrinking of collective knowledge from generation to generation. Only through the skilled use of reading-based study can knowledge be expanded beyond mediocrity.